



For Immediate Release

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STATE AGENCIES JOIN FORCES TO PREPARE FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA *COOPERATIVE EFFORT INCLUDES NEW WEB SITE*

(Indianapolis) – Today, officials from several state agencies announced new initiatives to help the state prepare for the possibilities of both avian influenza and pandemic influenza.

“We want Hoosiers to know that Indiana has a coordinated plan of action to respond to both avian influenza and a human influenza pandemic if necessary,” remarked Lt. Governor Becky Skillman. “While state government is ahead of the curve, every Indiana resident and business should also have an action plan. Through the partnerships that have formed as we have prepared the state, we have collected and made available important information that every Hoosier can use.”

State agencies have joined together to create a new Web site, www.fluinfo.in.gov, which will serve as a clearinghouse of timely and accurate information for Hoosiers and other visitors to the site.

“This new Web site is an excellent example of how a number of state agencies are working together to prepare for these possible health threats,” said Indiana Department of Homeland Security Planning Division Director Cliff Wojtalewicz. “Each agency has an important role to play, and this site will explain those roles and provide Hoosiers with easy access to other important information.”

One purpose of the Web site is to provide accurate information that can help clear up any confusion or common misconceptions. This includes an explanation of the fact that avian influenza and pandemic influenza are **not** the same thing. They would only become linked if a form of avian influenza mutated into a strain of influenza that could be efficiently transmitted human to human.

“Avian influenza might not cause a human influenza pandemic, but we need to be prepared, as pandemic flu would touch the lives of every single Hoosier,” said State Health Commissioner Judith A. Monroe, M.D. “We are working closely with our state agency partners to prepare for avian influenza in Indiana, in case it should become a threat to human health.”

"It is very important to note that a diagnosed case of avian influenza in Indiana or the United States would **not** signal the start of a human influenza pandemic," said State Veterinarian Bret Marsh, DVM. "It would prompt us to increase further our on-going monitoring of wild and domestic birds statewide."

"A strong partnership between the Board of Animal Health and Indiana's poultry industry has helped us nearly double the testing of flocks," Marsh added. "We also need to point out that poultry production in the United States is very different from other parts of the world, and avian influenza presents little risk to America's poultry and egg supply."

There is also information on the Web site on how Hoosiers can help with the monitoring and surveillance process. The USDA has established a national surveillance network and anyone who finds a dead bird should report it to Indiana's USDA Wildlife Conflict Hotline at 800-893-4116.

"Currently we have **no** evidence indicating that this virus is present in our North American wild bird population," said Indiana Department of Natural Resources Chief of Wildlife Wayne Bivans. "However, the DNR is working pro-actively with the USDA Wildlife Services to monitor migratory wild birds."

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